

P-Wise, David  
The Politics of Lying

(orig under Wise)

P-Sale, Kirkpatrick  
true police state—without public awareness or redress. David Wise concludes, without hyperbole:

## BOOKS

### How to tell lies (and get away with it?)

#### The Politics of Lying DAVID WISE

Random House, \$8.95

#### Political Prisoners in America

CHARLES GOODELL

Random House, \$8.95

#### KIRKPATRICK SALE

Most Americans, it is still safe to assume, were surprised by the Watergate revelations, but among those who were probably *not* surprised were undoubtedly David Wise and Charles Goodell. For although they completed their books well before the full disclosures of the break-in and the attendant campaign of political sabotage, they both must have concluded that the Nixon Administration is so nearly on the brink of totalitarianism that practically anything it did to secure its power and threaten its opposition would seem perfectly in place.

Not that these writers, both liberal types, are always fully aware of the totalitarianism that lurks behind their cautionary tales, but that certainly is the impression their books convey, especially read in tandem. Wise tells in great detail of the official lying, deceit and hypocrisy practiced daily by the present government, the deeply ingrained system of secrecy and deception, and the enormous power of the hidden government that operates as it wishes beyond public knowledge and scrutiny. Goodell relates in similarly great detail the operations of the government's enormous police-state apparatus, the official machinery of repression to silence and crush dissent, and the interlocking relation of courts and prosecutors and police in the sanctioning of repression. Taken together, these two accounts give a very devastating evidence of American progression to a red-white-and-blueocracy.

Wise's book has so far received the

greater attention, probably because most people reckon a former newspaperman (*N.Y. Herald-Tribune* White House correspondent) can write a better book than a former politician (Senator from New York, 1968-70). But the fact is that Wise's journalistic approach in this instance is as much a drawback as an advantage. True, he has a lot of good stories to tell (for example, how the CIA secretly trained anti-Communist Tibetans in the mountains of Colorado), he has done some diligent digging (most especially in ferreting out the details of the government's superhumanly complex classification system), and he has gathered into one place all of the old bones that were scattered around at the bottom of Credibility Gap (Eisenhower's U-2 lies, Kennedy's Bay of Pigs deception, Johnson's Tonkin Gulf duplicity, Nixon's Vietnam falsifications)—all of this a real service. But he writes with all the styles of a Time Inc. dropout, he has no analyses or theories to tie together and amplify his various tales, and his proffered liberal patch-it-up solutions are merely ludicrous—and *this* is a real disservice, for the subject is clearly important and demands an astute and analytical mind.

Still, the special value of Wise's book is that it gives an unmistakable and chilling picture of how the American government has come to the point of using "systematic deception as an instrument of highest national policy" and how "the government's capacity to distort information to preserve its own political power is almost limitless." There are not checks on this, no balances other than the occasional clumsiness which comes to light, and the super-powerful President, with a vast apparatus at his command, has the power to achieve practically anything, from the repression of radicals at home to the bombing of peasants abroad—and maybe to the accomplishment of a

The consent of the governed is basic to American democracy. If the governed are misled, if they are not told the truth, or if through official secrecy and deception they lack information on which to base intelligent decisions, the system may go on—but not as a democracy. After nearly two hundred years, this may be the price America pays for the politics of lying.

Charles Goodell's book is even more frightening, as difficult as that may seem, for it directs itself specifically to the habit of mind and the machinery of state that is being used for outright repression of the politically unpalatable or threatening. It has its defects, too—chiefly the superficial run-throughs of the history of political prisoners from Zenger to Alger Hiss, and a certain cloying naiveté, a kind of this-can't-really-be-happening-here? attitude that persists in spite of his copious evidence that it is. But with a cool lawyer's style and a politician's tenacity (plus a good co-authoring job from one Michael Smith), Goodell offers the grisly facts of repression: the secret police (FBI, Narcs, others), state surveillance and bugging of dissidents (including U.S. Senators, among them Goodell), paid informers (Chicago 8, Harrisburg 7, Camden 27, etc.), a nationwide computer intelligence network, political prosecutors both federal and local, witch-hunting grand juries, and much else besides. The case is devastating.

Goodell is prepared to argue, and for the most part proves, such premises as these:

— "The Justice Department not only seems bent on using police-state tactics, it seems determined to make it as difficult as possible to raise Constitutional challenges to its techniques in courts of law."

— Under Nixon "federal and local authorities [embarked] on a comprehensive program to suppress and to punish as "conspirators" those who encouraged, and some who merely talked about, civil disobedience [by violating]